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The Religious Situation—

THE BERKOUWER LECTURES*

It is good to see that the trustees of the Calvin Foundation have arranged for the publication of the lectures given under their auspices. The benefit of publication works in at least two directions. It extends the scope of influence of the Foundation. And it constitutes a challenge to future lecturers. There is something about the finality of print which stimulates to careful thought and statement. The more so when, as in this instance, the publication bears the seal of a university-college. It will be a trust of the Trustees then, not to sully that seal by placing it on a poor book.

Modern Uncertainty and Christian Faith is a good book. Those of us who heard one, or several, or all of Professor Berkouwer's lectures when he delivered them in 1952 felt that he spoke with the natural authority of conviction. This conviction was rooted in faith and in Scripture, and had grown strong in its encounter with learning. Just as the roots of a tree anchor themselves firmly and deeply when the crown is buffeted by the winds overhead, so the sinews of conviction grow strong in the high adventure and challenge of learning. In listening to Berkouwer, as he speaks in this book, we are listening to a man who has been inside the Reformed way of faith and life all the while, who has wholly identified himself with it, and who responds to it more and more as his conviction is whetted by the message and spirit of Kierkegaard and Barth, of Brunner and Tillich, of Marx and Feuerbach and Nietzsche, of Thomas and Pascal, and also of Earl Russell, Denis de Rougement, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Of the three themes sounded in this book—the contemporary religious situation, the Reformed faith, and the challenge posed by the first to the second—the accent falls on the *situation*. That is the importance of the book. It gives us a good sense of the modern religious situation. And it probably requires a reading of the book for us to appreciate that this religious situation in mid-century is not the same old situation there has always been. Orthodoxy and modernism, the obedience of faith and the apostacy of pride—yes, maybe these are always with us. But it is just the point of Berkouwer's lectures that these are different now than they used to be. One way of stating the difference is that the attack on orthodoxy used to be made in the name of science, philosophy, or reason. It is now made in the name of religion.

In his first lecture, concerned with the authority of the Bible, Professor Berkouwer makes the point that, according to the New Protestantism, the Old Protestantism idolized the Bible. It was, therefore, according to this same New Protestantism, a good thing that the nineteenth century by its scientific criticism undermined this impediment to the faith. If the Reformation had done good service in its emphasis on faith, it had done poor service in substituting for the idol of Pope and Church, the idol of the Bible. In this sense, then, the New Protestantism ar-

* *Modern Uncertainty and Christian Faith* The Calvin Foundation Lectures for 1952, by G. C. Berkouwer. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Gand Rapids, 1953. $1.50.

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The Berkouwer Lectures — Continued

gues, the Enlightenment and the modern mind did well to render that last idolatry ridiculous, and so open the way again for a properly "religious" authority. Those of us who have read such books as Tillich's *Protestant Era* and Pauck's *Reformation Heritage* will recognize that Berkouwer's slant on the new Protestantism in this regard is quite right.

In his chapter on Old and New Protestantism, Professor Berkouwer takes the position that the New, in spite of its considerable efforts to do so, cannot lay claim to continuity with the Old, that is, with the essential sixteenth century Protestantism. The New Protestantism of course makes that claim. And Roman Catholicism also affirms that the seeds of revolt present in the Old have simply ripened in the New. Of this last position, Berkouwer, the best of Calvinist students of Catholicism, says: "I do not know of a more vicious accusation than that there is a direct line from Luther to Nietzsche, a line from Calvin to the world of secularization." And concerning the tension between the Old and the New Protestantism, he writes: " . . . when we look at this growing conflict . . . we shall have to realize that the problem is so serious that we cannot face it with only a dead conservatism, repeating the old words without a living faith and without accepting our new task."

The modern *uncertainty* is the keyword to Berkouwer's fourth lecture, and is rightly the first term in the title of his book. Uncertainty, as he sees it, is the very feature of our mid-century. The old confidence in the adequacy of the new science for solving the problems of life is gone. The old enlightenment reason ended in positivism, and is discredited. The new philosophical and religious temper is not rationalistic. It is realistic, rather, existentialist, and irrational. Those of us who were used to bludgeoning the enemy for his pride of reason have now to deal with somebody who comes with the skepticism of unreason. It used to be that a prejudice, predilection, pre-supposition, or dogma was an offense to mind. Now a prejudice has status, and all prejudices have equal rights.

PROFESSOR Berkouwer's chapter on Catholicism, entitled "Reformation or Revolution," is a strong one. He indicates that the Reformation came up out of a study of the Bible, was a positive movement, and, so far from being revolutionary, bowed to the scepter of Christ in the humility of obedience. The theological trend in the Roman church, on the contrary, seems to be giving more and more importance to the human role in redemption. The new Protestantism and the new Catholicism, allegedly at opposite poles from each other, move towards concurrence in stressing the human aspect of revelation.

So the argument moves on to ethics, to law and the role of law, to morals. The nihilism of our time has led man to accept a kind of realism. Law is no longer regarded as holy and good, and it is in blindness to the blessing of the law that sin has its strongest bulwark. The Christian response to this situation must be a manifest and unfeigned joy in obedience to the law.

Berkouwer's favorite word in these lectures is "task." He means it in the Dutch sense of *roeping*, of course. That is the burden of his book: an outline of the new religious situation and its new challenge to orthodoxy. He sees the crisis of our age as being a crisis in obedience, a flight from responsibility. Our role then is to listen, believe, and obey. What he calls for is the living, positive testimony of the life of faith. The world, he says, is tired of protest. It wants affirmation, thesis, life. This is our "task" in the face of the situation.

HENRY ZYLSTRA

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"Once when Dr. Abraham Kuyper was attacked because of his view of holy Scripture and its authority, he answered: 'This is my prejudice; this is my "a priori"; the Lord has given it to me.' And when Bavinck's friend Snouck Hurgronje wrote him that he did not understand his obedience to the Bible, Bavinck answered: 'The more I live and think, the less I can escape from the authority of Scripture, just like all simple believers.' It is the same attitude as that of Warfield, when he wrote that the Scriptures owe their origin to an activity of God, the Holy Ghost, and are in the highest and truest sense His creation."

"We see in our time a falling away of confidence in the possibilities of human reason, and we usually call this the invasion of rationalism . . . Some people think that this is a very favorable situation for the church and the preaching of the Gospel. But we have to be careful. Of course, it is possible, humanly speaking, that some are embarrassed by the collapse of reason and will listen again to the Word of God. But we should never forget that the reaction against the supremacy of human reason has become in our time more and more a protest against all certainty . . . Life, we are told, cannot be understood by reason and from the intellectual level. Life is an experiment. Man has to live dangerously — that is the irrationalistic solution; no essence, no reason, no certainty, but uncertainty, existence, and no more. For that reason irrationalism is not less dangerous than rationalism for the Christian faith."

G. C. BERKOUWER in
Modern Uncertainty and Christian Faith

ECUMENICITY: The Calling and Problem of the Church

By JOHN H. KROMMINGA

III. Concrete Alternatives

THE task remaining to us in this concluding article on ecumenicity is to evaluate the various programs for interdenominational co-operation and suggest which of several courses we should follow. We undertake that it is a subject of great significance for the future of the Church. We may state at the outset that no final answer will be given to our problem; the best we can hope for is that the proper direction for our future thought and activity may be indicated. But for these very reasons we hope that this study will commend itself to the thoughtful and prayerful consideration of our readers.

1. The World Council of Churches

THE oldest, broadest, and most pretentious of the modern movements toward ecumenicity merits our first attention. There is a great difference in the reaction of various evangelical churches to this movement. Some violently repudiate the Council and almost everything that it stands for. Some tend to act as if it did not exist. But some conservative groups and individuals advocate membership in the World Council in order to strengthen the hands of the conservative element in it.

There is something appealing about this latter attitude. It cannot be tossed off with just a passing reference. But there is an insuperable difficulty for us in adopting this attitude, as long as the World Council remains what it is. If the organization were merely a discussion forum, our duty might be to make the conservative witness just as strong as possible; and this could best be done from within.

But the World Council of Churches claims or hopes to be more than a discussion forum. We are advisedly indefinite as to whether this is a present claim or a future hope, because the exact nature of the case has not become fully clear to us. One voice says that the ultimate aim of the Council is the organic unity of all Christendom in one undivided Church. Another would say, "We *are* one Church, and are simply seeking to bring this fact to expression."

Even if these are two different things, which is not clear, our reaction does not depend on which we choose as definitive. The inescapable fact is that there can be no real fellowship or proposals of unity between Reformed orthodoxy and those who deny the true nature of the church or the revealed character of Christian theology. This is not at all to say, with some, that we should not strive toward unity with somebody; the fact is that we should. But this organization clearly runs afoul of our conception of the marks of the true Church.

The criticism that the constituent bodies are not true Churches does not apply equally to all. But once within the organization, we can hardly profess to discriminate between the purer and the less pure. We become corporately responsible for all the decisions of the majority. This becomes a very serious matter indeed when the organization involved professes to be the Body of Christ.

And yet when we have said that we cannot join the World Council of Churches, we do not feel that we are quite through with the matter. All of our information about the Council has something of a second-hand character about it. At best we are acquainted with its publications. At worst, we simply accept the rabid criticisms which others raise. Next summer we shall have a fine opportunity to see the Council working at first hand — the kind of opportunity which our brethren in the Gereformeerde Kerken had in 1948, and of which they availed themselves in Amsterdam. Would there be any harm in sending official observers to this assembly? Should the danger of "guilt by association" deter us, or is it not our duty to observe as closely as possible, that we may know clearly whereof we speak?

2. The National Association of Evangelicals

THE N. A. E. has been much more fully discussed among us, although our decision to withdraw from its membership as a denomination was very poorly documented. If we had good and sufficient reasons for withdrawing, we ought to have said so. Nobody knows to this day whether the argumentation of the "majority report" was accepted wholly, or in part, or not at all. But the facts remain that once we were in and now we are out. Should we seek readmission, making this the channel for our ecumenical activities?

I speak as a former supporter of the N. A. E., and I do not find within me to this day any such animosity toward the organization as I seem to detect in others. But I must confess that the N. A. E., regardless of the good it may do or the merits it may have, cannot satisfy us on the score of ecumenicity, because of its low view of the Church. This low view came to clear reflection in a discussion spread upon the pages of *United Evangelical Action,* from May 15, 1951 to March 5, 1952. James Daane and J. G. Vos participated in the discussion, and brought out clearly the discrepancy between Fundamentalism's position and the emphasis of Calvin on the Visible Church (reflected in the Belgic Confession, XXIX, "Outside of it there is no salvation").

We are forced to conclude that while discussion groups and inspirational meetings of Christian individuals and societies are fine in themselves, may produce valuable service organizations, and are not *per se* illegitimate fields of co-operation for us as individuals, the N. A. E. cannot serve as the expression of the unity of the Visible Church which our age so sorely needs. It explicitly disavows any drive toward organizational unity. Furthermore, it includes many who cannot meet any

Ecumenicity – Concrete Alternatives — Continued

reasonably strict interpretation of the marks of the true Church. For purposes of real ecumenicity, therefore, the N. A. E. is too loose, too low, and too broad; too loose in its organization, too low in its conception of the Church, and too broad in its theological basis.

3. The American and International Councils of Christian Churches

Some Reformed thinkers who repudiate the N. A. E. find themselves drawn toward the I. C. C. C. Can we share this attitude? We find that there is something appealing about these organizations, particularly in their aggressive defense of the inspiration of the Word. There is something also which repels us in certain of their methods and utterances, their individuals and publicity, their accusations and publications. But these personal reactions are not directly of the essence of the matter.

More to the point, these councils tend to magnify separation until it becomes a mark of the true Church; *the* definitive mark in our day. In their controversy with the N. A. E. it appears that even to associate with those who have not separated from a body which they judge to be apostate becomes a proof of apostasy in itself. This takes place at the very time that the historic marks of the Church are lightly regarded. I find it passing strange that one of the Reformed bodies in the Netherlands, so strict that it cannot co-operate with other Reformed bodies, can comfortably join hands with frankly Arminian bodies in the I. C. C. C. A further questionable attitude of these councils is the distinct suggestion that unity is a mark of the Beast, rather than a valid Christian ideal.

The unpopular utterances of these organizations may be, as some claim, only surface phenomena. It may further be true, as some maintain, that only a person or a body which is "fanatic" in some sense will accomplish anything. But when these things spring from a serious misconception of the nature and task of the Church, they must be considered errors which forbid our participation.

4. The Reformed Ecumenical Synod

One more alternative remains in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. There is hope for this organization, but as yet it is an unrealized hope, and not even clearly understood. If this hope is ever to be realized, something ought to be done about it soon. Two thirds of its name—that it is Reformed and ecumenical—can be reasonably well defended. But it is not a synod. It is as yet no more than a discussion group; but, not admitting this character, it has little to discuss. It is supposed to be a synod, but has no authority. It is a lion with no teeth and claws, and only a very feeble roar.

Some among us feel that the solution of this difficulty is simply to change the name of this synod to "council" or "conference" or some weaker term. We feel, however, that to move in this direction would be out of harmony with the spirit with which we begin to co-operate in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. In the 1944 report to Synod previously mentioned (*Acts*, 1944, pp. 330-367) such argumentation as this is found: that we should capitalize upon modern facilities of transportation and communication to end a disunity which was once dictated by distance; that we should engage in correspondence with other truly Reformed bodies, beginning "at Jerusalem," with a view to confederation. It may be that we never were really convinced of the soundness of this position. If we were, we seem to have lost that conviction. At all events, if any such vision is ever to become a reality, there is much education to be offered, much lethargy to be dispelled, and undoubtedly much opposition to be overcome.

It appears that we are not quite alone in this hope. It became apparent at Edinburgh in 1953 that Dr. Nauta, at least, and possibly the Gereformeerde Kerken with him, cherished the same ideal, of a genuine Synod of Reformed Churches from all over the world. This ideal may be a long way off; but if it is Scripturally and confessionally valid, we ought not to equivocate about it or apologize for it, but work toward it, in spite of all the real difficulties which stand in the way.

If this is too distant a goal for immediate action, let us do as our 1944 report further suggests, and use such things as inter-Church correspondence, the exchange of fraternal delegates, self-criticism and the mutual exhortation and criticism of each other to labor toward that distant ideal step by step. Let us be sure of this, that if true ecumenicity cannot begin in co-operation and continue in unity between orthodox Reformed bodies, it holds no future promise for us at all.

We need a zeal for ecumenicity which is equal or superior to the liberal zeal, without the debilitating influence of doctrinal indifference. We need a high Calvinistic conception of the Church which distinguishes the Reformed tradition from both the rationalistic and revivalistic traditions. We ought to take our Reformed confessions seriously, both in their jealous insistence on purity of doctrine and in their insistence that the Church ought to strive toward visible catholicity.

Our goal must be simply a Church which is at once holy and catholic. Perhaps that goal is not simple at all; but it is an imperative necessity. Equally difficult, but even more imperative, is our duty to listen once again to our Lord: "That they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me."

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Geert Egberts Boer

By JACOB VANDEN BOSCH

After the death of the Rev. Douwe J. Vander Werp the man who looms largest in the annals of the Christian Reformed Church is the Rev. Geert Egberts Boer. As new churches were organized, the number of ministers increased both by being called from Holland and by being trained here, and Rev. Boer was the figure who towered above them all. He became a sort of Atlas by whom was borne a whole ecclesiastical world.

Geert Egberts Boer was born March 1, 1832, at Roderwolde, in the province of Drenthe, Holland. His parents were farmers of moderate means. Naturally serious, Boer, the boy, was sensitive to religious impressions, and in the development of his inner life owed much to a pious mother. Though baptized and reared in the state church, at an early age he became interested in the gospel of sovereign grace as it was presented by ministers of the Secession. However, not until he was twenty-five years old did he join one of the churches of the Secession by profession of faith. He had some experience in Army life, but spent most of his early years in working for farmers of the neighborhood. At this time a young man who later became the Reverend Hendrik Van Hoogen was an intimate friend.

It was a gracious Providence that guided Boer in the critical days of his young manhood and directed his way into the ministry. There were temptations and disappointments to be overcome. At one time he was employed by a rich man, the owner of a baronial estate with castle. Appointed to do clerical work, he was so efficient that he was made the man's private secretary, a position he greatly coveted because it would bring him honor and a good income. But since acceptance of the offer would mean Sunday labor, he rejected this tempting offer. Of such stern stuff the young man was made.

Young Boer did not like farming. His first desire was to be a teacher, but this ambition could not be realized because he was too old: he had passed the minimum age limit specified by law. His next desire was to be a minister of the gospel, but when with five others he appeared before a committee of classis to be recommended for support, he was among the four not accepted. J. Kremer, later his successor as pastor of the Spring Street church, was one of the two who successfully passed the examination. Boer was disappointed and looked upon the outcome as an indication of Providence that he should not aspire to the ministry. However, among those who knew him and saw in him a man of promise was Rev. Vande Vegte, pastor of a neighboring church, who disabused him of the notion that this particular disappointment necessarily meant final frustration and urged him to work for the realization of his desire by taking private lessons. Boer lent a willing ear to this advice. At this juncture, a widow, owner of a large estate, in whose employ he was at the time, displayed a deep interest in her ambitious servant, and, concurring in the advice of the minister, made it possible for him to devote some time each day to study. She also supplied the means that enabled him, after a year of private study, to enroll as a student at Kampen. Sometimes a frustrated providence paves the way for favorable providences.

Endowed with a good mind and a firm purpose, Boer made commendable progress at Kampen, finishing the three year literary course in two years. During this time he even preached in various churches and was popular. In two more years of study he finished the prescribed theological course and was declared eligible to a call. This was in 1865. G. K. Hemkes and H. Van Hoogen also finished their studies at the same time.

After being married to Miss Jetsche Holtrop, from which happy union issued eight children, he was ordained that same year and served two churches that prospered greatly under his spiritual care. In 1873 he received a second call from the large Spring Street church at Grand Rapids. Only after much struggle and hesitation did he feel free to accept this call. This decision, however, plunged him into new distress, from which he found no relief until he was encouraged by his former professors at Kampen, whose advice he sought, to abide by his decision. The thought that the needs of the church in the new world were more urgent than those of his in the old reassured him and restored peace to his soul. So in the late summer of 1873, he, together with his family, braved the hardships of a two weeks ocean voyage to become the pastor of the Spring Street church. The Reverend Jacob Noordewier, a former member of his last church in Holland, officiated at the installation services. Rev. Boer's selection by the General Assembly to be the first teacher in the theological school to be organized, brought to a close his energetic services in this large and prosperous church. Docent was the official title given him.

On march 15, 1876, Docent Boer began his new career with a public address on the subject, *The Education of Ministers of the Gospel,* and the foundations of the new school were laid. This event was the signal for great rejoicing among the churches, for a cherished ideal had at long last been realized. Ever since 1861, when Rev. K. Vanden Bosch of Noordeloos had called the attention of classis to the need of educating men for the gospel ministry, the churches had wrestled with this problem. Individual ministers were asked to undertake this task, but, though the school in the parsonage did yeoman's service, the arrangement was unsatisfactory and was felt to be so by both pastor-professor and student. For some years attempts had been made to found a seminary, but no one was willing to shoulder the responsibility of being the first instructor. Calls had been extended to prominent divines across the sea such as Rev. H. Vissink, a classmate of Rev. Boer, Professor S. VanVelzen of Kampen, and Rev. J. Bavinck, father of the illustrious theologian, Dr. Herman Bavinck, but all had declined. There was, therefore, reason enough for rejoicing; after much prayer and effort an ardent wish had finally been fulfilled—the organization of a theological school. The realization of this fond hope, viewed in retrospect, reveals our fathers as men endowed with wisdom and foresight. For let it be

Geert Egberts Boer — Continued

known that in our land seminaries were slow in being organized. The Presbyterians, for example, did not have a seminary until 1812 when Princeton Theological Seminary was founded, and the Reformed Church of America did not permanently establish the seminary at New Brunswick until 1810, in each case decades after the denomination came into existence. Our fathers founded the Theological School only nineteen years after the denomination began its independent existence.

Our early leaders were unstinting in their efforts to secure some one competent to train future ministers. In 1871, before they sent out calls to a foreign shore, they enabled Walter Hellenthal, member of the church at Niekerk, to study at Kampen by promising him the necessary financial support. Hellenthal was twenty-two years old and a young man of great promise, who had had five years of college work, having perhaps finished the sophomore year. But alas! Soon after his arrival in Holland, he contracted small pox and died. A great expectation had been blasted. Had he lived and had he proved to be the right man for the professorship, the language problem might have been more wisely and more smoothly solved than it was. Confidence in a professor who was master of both languages might have made the solution of the problem easier. Our early leaders were seemingly more charitable towards the use of the English language in our churches than was the heavy influx of immigrants during the eighties and the nineties.

The selection of Rev. Boer had much to do with making Grand Rapids the home of the school. When the General Assembly in 1875 called Rev. J. Bavinck for the second time, it chose Holland, Michigan, to be the place of his teaching activities. Had he accepted, Holland might have become the educational center of our churches. But when Rev. Boer accepted and no provision had been made for the housing of the school, Spring Street church offered the use of the second story of its school on Williams Street for the nominal rent of $52.00 a year, and Grand Rapids remained the seat of our theological education.

Docent Boer began his teaching career with seven students, five of them having been transferred from Rev. Vander Werp the previous fall. The course called for six years of study, four literary and two theological, and Docent Boer was responsible for teaching every subject in the curriculum. The fact that the number of students was small and that some subjects could be taught in rotation lightened the burden somewhat. On the other hand, the advanced age of not a few students and their difficulty in accustoming themselves to the sedentary life and the sustained intellectual activities of a student did not make teaching easy.

Like every serious teacher Docent Boer reflected on the nature of his work and on the method to be employed to make it serve its purpose. He believed that he could achieve that purpose best by choosing short and compact textbooks that gave a survey of the subject as a whole and that showed the relation of the parts to the whole and to each other. He also believed in the excellent pedagogical principle of self-activity, which means that a student by personal initiative should acquire the habit of understanding and digesting the material given him in his brief texts. Undoubtedly the adoption of these principles accounts very largely for the proficiency which the men trained by him displayed as ministers of the gospel. They had learned the art of studying by themselves.

No man was busier than Docent Boer. True, by the appointment of Rev. G. K. Hemkes in 1884, by the coming of Dr. Geerhardus Vos in 1888, and by the addition of Messrs. A. J. Rooks and K. Schoolland to the faculty in 1894 to teach literary subjects, his burden was gradually lightened. But for some years it seemed that Rev. Vander Werp had bequeathed all his ecclesiastical cares and worries to him. As if his duties were not abundant enough, he was by appointment, editor of *De Wachter* until 1878 when Rev. G. K. Hemkes of Vriesland was designated to relieve him, and again from 1888 to 1895 when the paper appeared weekly instead of biweekly as it had done up to 1880. And as though there was not enough variety in his activities, the churches not only insisted on his occupying their pulpits on Sunday, but even requested his services at funerals, and Docent Boer was too kind ever to refuse a request. The result was that through the force of circumstances and his own helpful nature he distributed his efforts over too wide an area, a manner of working that made for breadth rather than for depth, for readiness in many things rather than for concentration in any particular field.

In 1902, at the age of seventy, Professor Boer—he was no longer known as docent—retired. But he was not idle: he still preached nearly every Sunday; he still took an active interest in the Home for the Aged, serving as vice-president of the board; he still functioned as member of a committee to further the cause of Christian elementary education. The days of his retirement, however, were but few. On March 26, 1904, he suddenly died, only a day before the Sunday on which he was scheduled to preach for the Central Avenue people in Holland, which engagement he could not keep ostensibly because floods had stopped train service, but in reality because his heavenly Father promoted him to higher service.

It is now almost half a century ago that Professor Boer departed. Important figure though he was, today there are but few who remember him. And yet, the memory of a man whose labors for the denomination were so abundant we should not willingly let die. We should remember him first of all as one who was heart and soul a preacher of the gospel. His resonant voice, his clear articulation, and his natural manner of speaking were endowments which he used to good advantage. He felt happiest when he was in the pulpit. His spirits rose when he faced an audience of worshipers. No matter how busy he was, he could not resist availing himself of the opportunity to preach. Till the day of his death his services were in great demand: often he had more requests than he could honor. Very fittingly Professor Hemkes, a colleague of many years, chose for the biography of his friend the title, *A Man of the People,* and Rev. John W. Brink, in his boyhood a member of his church, at the funeral discoursed on the words spoken of Jesus, "The people heard

him gladly." And no wonder, for in his sermons Professor Boer tried to present his message so simply as to be understood and aimed at being spiritually helpful, warning the unconverted and speaking to the heart of Jerusalem. He felt that it was a preacher's duty to win souls for Christ.

For many years after his arrival in this country Docent Boer was a leader. Not only as a preacher, but also as teacher he exerted a wholesome influence. By means of the ideas instilled in prospective preachers he did much toward unifying the theological thought of the churches, and by means of his forbearing example he taught others to be tolerant. Though he was too mild of temperament to be a militant figure, he did have the courage to take both a defensive and an offensive stand in certain controversial issues. Especially did he do so as editor of *De Wachter*. So, for example, at a time when this was needed he manfully defended the independent existence of the Christian Reformed Church against the attacks of Rev. B. De Bey of the Reformed Church of America, whose arguments he respectfully allowed space in the columns of *De Wachter*. The tone of this controversy was always courteous and without bitterness. Thus also he rebuked the bigotry, both in editorial utterance and by example, of some who condemned cooperation in any form with those belonging to other denominations. Fearlessly he attended a conference of members of the Reformed Church, which he called a sister church. To cite one more example, he also considered it to be his duty to correct extreme views in respect to the covenant of grace and baptism. Courage he had, but a militant spirit he never displayed.

His personality and his piety were an asset in exercising leadership. Kind, friendly, and sympathetic, he was considerate of the feelings of others and easily accessible for such as wished to discuss with him some problems or some controversial issue. Withal he was a humble man, who, though conscious of his responsibilities and powers, never pretended to be a great scholar or a great man in any sense. As he reviewed his life, he derived comfort from the fact that he had been used of the Lord to train ministers of the gospel, and that they knew the chief aim of their work to be the winning of souls for Christ and nobly served the churches. He did not stand on his dignity, but endured magnanimously the contradictions and the criticisms of others. All this was but an expression of the piety of the man. All his experiences led him to exercise himself in godliness. His afflictions and his disappointments he viewed as chastenings of his heavenly Father and his blessings as unmerited favors.

His willingness to help in emergency counted heavily in his favor, a trait that was encouraged and reinforced by his readiness of mind. Already as a young man he exhibited ability to prepare on short notice. When he was examined by classis to be admitted to the ministry, the sermon he delivered was an eleventh hour production because a text had not been assigned him in time. Similar experiences happened to him repeatedly. Never did anyone appeal to him in vain.

Such was the subject of our sketch. In spite of, rather precisely because of, his limitations, he was the man of the hour. He came to us at a time when there was dire need of just such an one as he was. With a mind that worked easily and rapidly, with a spirit of unselfish readiness, and with a reliance on God's favor, he met these needs bravely. Aware of the many labors of love this man of God performed in its behalf, posterity rises and calls him blessed.

"If those who are called philosophers, and especially the Platonists, have said aught that is true and in harmony with our faith, we are not only not to shrink from it, but to claim it for our own use from those who have unlawful possession of it. For, as the Egyptians had not only the idols and heavy burdens which the people of Israel hated and fled from, but also vessels and ornaments of gold and silver, and garments, which the same people when going out of Egypt appropriated to themselves, designing them for a better use, not doing this on their own authority, but by the command of God . . . ; in the same way all branches of heathen learning have not only false and superstitious fancies and heavy burdens of unnecessary toil, which every one of us, when going out under the leadership of Christ from the fellowship of the heathen, ought to abhor and avoid; but they contain also liberal instruction which is better adapted to the use of the truth, and some most excellent precepts of morality; and some truths in regard even to the worship of the One God are found among them. Now these are, so to speak, their gold and silver, which they did not create themselves, but dug out of the mines of God's providence which are everywhere scattered abroad, and are perversely and unlawfully prostituting to the worship of devils. These, therefore, the Christian, when he separates himself in spirit from the miserable fellowship of these men, ought to take away from them, and to devote to their proper use in preaching the gospel. Their garments, also, — that is, human institutions such as are adapted to that intercourse with men which is indispensable in this life — we must take and turn to a Christian use."

St. Augustine (354-430 AD), *On Christian Doctrine II,* 61

"Wherefore, since it is our duty fully to enjoy the truth which lives unchangeably, and since the triune God takes counsel in this truth for the things which He has made, the soul must be purified that it may have power to perceive that light, and to rest in it when it is perceived. And let us look upon this purification as a kind of journey or voyage to our native land. For it is not by change of place that we can come nearer to Him who is in every place, but by the cultivation of pure desires and virtuous habits."

St. Augustine (354-430 AD), *On Christian Doctrine,* I, 10

The College and the Church

by IDZERD VAN DELLEN*

Two Classes overtured the last Synod in regard to the separation of Calvin College from the Church.

The first Overture (*Acts*, 544-545, No. 23) reads as follows:

> Classis Oostfriesland overtures Synod to take steps towards separating Calvin College and Seminary, in order that the College may be turned over to a parental Society, established just for that purpose.

The other Overture says (*Acts*, 573, No. 56):

> Classis Grand Rapids West endorses the Overture of the Alpine Avenue Consistory in which it requests Synod that inasmuch as it is not the function of the Church to engage in general education except in an emergency, that Synod appoint a Committee to study whether there be any practical way in which Calvin College can be turned over to a Society without jeopardizing its existence or orthodoxy.

Synod decided not to "accede" to these overtures, and "questioned the validity of the premise" that the Church can maintain a College only in an emergency. In taking this stand Synod did not answer the five grounds given by Classis Oostfriesland and the one of Classis Grand Rapids West. All Synod did to support its statement was to refer to the decisions of former Synods, and to state that the grounds expressed by past Synods have not been invalidated, and that the issue has been under study by several past Synods and in each case rejected for sound reasons. It was also said that "our Church and its people are not ready for such drastic action at this time" (*Acts*, 145-146).

It is not clear why this last observation was added to the pronouncements of Synod. If it is true that "the issue has been under study by several Synods, and in each case has been rejected for sound reasons" it follows logically that we should *never* take "such drastic action" as separating Calvin College from the Church. It makes the impression that this "drastic" pronouncement of Synod is made as a sort of excuse for not even appointing a Study Committee. Not "at this time." But will the time ever be ready? I could not help thinking of the excuse made by the people who were called to build the Temple, and who said: "The time is not come for Jehovah's house to be built" (Haggai 1:2).

It seems to me that Synod in a more or less veiled way has pronounced a principle which is of far-reaching consequences, namely: *It is the right of the Church to maintain a College*, not only in case of an emergency, but without reservations. And it might just as well be said: *It is the right of the Church to maintain a University*, for only recently one of our leading men wrote that our College in principle is a University; and it is.

Now Synod did not *prove* that former Synods have ever decided this, and it is noticeable that Synod does not give the "sound reasons" for this thesis, grounds which never have been "invalidated." And I doubt very much that such decisions based on sound reasons can be found in Acts of former Synods.

It certainly is time to take this pronouncement of Synod under the "loupe." Future Synods may refer to the decision of the Synod of 1953 when some Overture requests that a study be made of this subject. From now on our Synods may take for granted that this is what the Christian Reformed Church believes, and that it is superfluous to make more study of the issue.

It is to be deplored that Synod did not see fit to appoint a Committee to make a thorough study of this matter. But since this was not done we feel it our duty to sound the alarm, because it is very evident that our Church is drifting in a direction which is contrary to reformed, Calvinistic principles, and will prove to be detrimental to both Church and College (University).

* * *

Classis Oostfriesland states in its Overture that "It has been admitted that running a college is not the business of the Church. The Church might do it, but not as a matter of principle, simply as a matter of expedience." And Classis Grand Rapids West is convinced that "it is not the function of the Church to engage in general education, except in an emergency."

Both Classes take for granted that our Church agrees to this principle. Practically all our schools thus far have been owned and operated by Societies. It is true that Calvin College is an exception to this rule, but that is the case because Calvin College originated from the preparatory department of the Seminary, and as such was part of the Church institution for the training of ministers. But this department gradually developed into a College, an institution for higher learning. It has not only a pre-seminary course, but many other courses which are taught in a liberal arts institution. And not only men are enrolled as students but also women.

We are grateful that God gave us this institution. We certainly need a College, and a Calvinistic University. We rejoice that our people are willing to support an institution for higher learning, and that God has given us a large number of devoted scholars to teach there, and that so many of our young people receive instruction there. It is our heartfelt desire and prayer that this our school may prosper and flourish, and may become more and more a blessing. In writing this article we are seeking the best interests of Calvin College, the school we love.

But is it the function of the Church to engage in general education? As far as we know, this question has up to now been answered in the negative. It has been stated repeatedly that Calvin College remained a church institution because for the time being this was expedient. The Synod of 1953, however, "questions the validity of the premise" that it is not the function of the Church to engage in general education, except in an emergency. But Synod gives no reasons why it questions this premise to which we all have subscribed until now. The overtures of the two Classes are just pushed aside by this sweeping statement. It seems

*The Reverend Idzerd Van Dellen, Minister-Emeritus of the Christian Reformed Church, lives in Denver, Colorado.

to us that the Committee of Pre-Advice did not give much attention to the principle involved and considered it expedient thus to dispose of this troublesome matter, which threatens to become a thorn in the flesh of Synod. And was Synod aware of what it did when in one of its last sessions it adopted the advice of the Committee?

* * *

IT is our intention in this article to prove that "it is *not* the function of the Church to engage in general education," or, to quote Classis Oostfriesland, "that it is *not* the business of the Church to run a College."

When speaking of the Church we think of the Church as an institute, the organized Church, which is the manifestation of the body of Christ, and has its offices — ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons — and its assemblies — consistories, Classes, and Synods.

The Church as an Institute has a specific place and task.

Our Confession of Faith (Art. 29) teaches that the marks by which the true Church is known are: "If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if it maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; and if Church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin." And in Art. 30 we read: "This true Church must be governed by that spiritual polity which our Lord has taught us in His Word: namely, that there must be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God, and to administer the sacraments; also elders and deacons, who together with the pastors form the Council of the Church; that by these means the true religion may be preserved, and the true doctrine everywhere propagated, likewise transgressors punished, and restrained by spiritual means; also that the poor and distressed may be relieved and comforted according to their necessities. By these means everything will be carried on in the Church with good order and decency when faithful men are chosen, according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul in his epistle to Timothy."

We also refer to our Church Order which speaks of the office of the Minister (Art. 16), of that of Professors of Theology (Art. 23), and of that of the Deacons (Art. 25); and we refer to the Forms for the installation of officers (see Appendix to *Psalter Hymnal*).

All this proves that it is a glorious task to which the instituted Church is called. The Church is placed in the midst of the world to "go, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20a). "The Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). It has to proclaim the truth in all spheres of life. Its field is the world (Matt. 13:38). It must preach Christ Jesus, the crucified, risen Lord, who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden (Col. 2:3).

It is evident that the place and the task of the Church is unique. The Confession of Faith states that it is "governed by a *spiritual* polity," and that transgressors are punished and restrained by *spiritual* means. As such it is distinguished from the State. The Church received "the keys of the Kingdom of heaven," namely: "The preaching of the holy gospel, and church discipline or excommunication out of the Christian Church" (*Catechism*, Lord's Day 31), while the State, the civil government, beareth the sword, as a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil (Rom. 13:1-7).

Now the Church should not enter other spheres of life like those of civil government, the home, the school, social organizations, and the like. Our Confession refers to the false Church as a warning example. "As for the false Church, it ascribes more power and authority to itself and its ordinances than the Word of God, and will not submit itself to the yoke of Christ" (Art. 30).

The Church is like a beacon light in the midst of the world. It spreads its light of truth in all directions. But it has its own place and calling, and may not interfere with other spheres. As soon as it does this, its glory is gone and it loses its power. History proves this abundantly. Think of the days of Constantine when the Church became a world power. The Roman Catholic Church with its Vatican City is a warning example. When the ark of Jehovah was fetched out of Shiloh "where Jehovah sitteth above the cherubim" to serve the wicked sons of Eli in their battle against the Philistines, Israel lost out. Well might the dying daughter-in-law of Eli, the wife of Phinehas, then name her new born son Icabod, for she said: "The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken" (I Sam. 4:21-22).

* * *

IT is not the function of the Church to engage in general education. That however does not mean that the instituted Church is not called *to teach*. But the instruction given by the Church bears a unique character.

The ministers of God's Word are "pastors and *teachers*" (Eph. 4:11), and the Form for their Ordination or Installation states that "it belongs to their office to instruct the children of the Church in the doctrine of salvation." Their instruction therefore bears a peculiar character. In the great commission the Lord Jesus calls His disciples, and in them His Church of all ages, to teach those who were made disciples "to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20a). Our Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology makes it very plain that those "highly esteemed brethren" are not called to engage in general education. It is their office "to expound (to the "youths and men" trained for the holy ministry) the mysteries of faith; caution them against the errors and heresies of the old but especially of the new day; seek to explain to them, not only how they as teachers are to instruct the sheep of the Lord, but also how they as pastors are to shepherd them." And in doing this they are not engaged in general education like the professors or instructors in a College or University, though they of course also have to use "the regular methods of education," which methods must just as well be used by the ministers in the catechism room.

Thus far the Church has felt that we must distinguish between the teaching in the Seminary and the instruction given in the College. The Professors of Theology are *installed* into their

office, and the Professors and Instructors of the College are *appointed* by Synod or the Board of Trustees (Curatorium) and are not installed. It indicates that there is a marked difference between the "training for the holy ministry" and general education. And this also holds for the catechetical instruction given by the minister of the Word, and the general education given in the elementary school and in high schools, colleges, and universities.

* * *

THE instituted Church has its special offices, as we have seen above. These offices are the organs through which the instituted Church acts. And they are limited in their authority and power. It is not their function to engage in general education. But this does not mean that the *members* of the Church have no responsibility for schools of lower and higher education. *They* also have their office. Of this office our Heidelberg Catechism plainly speaks in Question and Answer 32. As prophets they have to confess the name of Christ, as priests they give themselves a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him, and as kings with a free and good conscience they fight against sin and the devil in this life, and hereafter reign with Him eternally over all creatures. We call this the office of believers. It should be active in all spheres of life where the Christian is called to labor. It functions in the home and in the Church and state and in social life. In whatever station the believer is placed, he must always show that he is a member of Christ, and a partaker of His anointing, and as such prophet, priest, and king. Husband and wife must show it in their mutual relationship. It makes for a truly Christian home. It should be seen in the citizenship of the Christian, and in his daily work.

The parents have to exercise this office in training their children in the fear and the admonition of the God of the Covenant; and the special office in the Church has to see to it that this is done by the parents. "Hence the parents must promise when their children are baptized to instruct them in the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testament, and cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of their power (Form for the Baptism of Infants). And in order to do this the parents must of a necessity organize Societies, which recognize and acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testament, and which is taught in the Christian Church. In other words, those Societies and schools should be based on the holy Scriptures as they find their expression in the Confessions of Faith of the churches to which the members of the Societies belong. And the Church through its special offices should stimulate the activity of the general office of the believers in the home and in the school, in College and University, and in all walks and spheres of life. It should not take over the office of the believers or stifle it, but, to the contrary, should do all in its power to guide it and to help it along. We should not create a "clergy" which lords it over the "laity" just as little as the believers in their general office should set aside the special office.

If the special office takes over the responsibility of the office of the believers, it weakens that office, and that is to the detriment of the Church. Our Confession of Faith (Art. 27) describes the Church as "a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit. And those believers should not be treated by the special offices as if they were on a lower level of authority. That leads to hierarchy in the Church of Christ. And when the office of the believers loses its authority and power, the special offices, which represent the Church, and are elected out of the number of believers, also weaken and lose out.

Considering the above, we conclude that it is the function of the believers to organize Societies for the maintenance of Christian elementary schools, high schools, Colleges and Universities, based upon the Confessions of Faith of the Churches to which the believers belong. And further that it is the function of the instituted Church through its offices to see to it that this is done by the believers, and to direct, promote, and stimulate as much as possible the activity of the believers in this respect.

FOR practical reasons many think that Calvin College should remain an institution owned and operated by the Church.

It is considered to be *safest*. But time will tell that this is not the case.

The instituted Church has no *organ* to judge about general education or about science (*wetenschap*) in general. The officers of the Church are committed to the spiritual polity. The Board of Trustees, through which body Synod acts in taking care of Calvin College, is nearly exclusively composed of ministers of the gospel, and they are appointed not as scholars but as ministers. They do not function as men of science but as shepherds. And how can they in that capacity properly take care of the College? And how can Synod do this? Is Synod able to judge, for instance, whether a particular professor is competent to teach natural science, or biology, or modern literature, or philosophy, or any of the other studies which belong to the sphere of science in general? History teaches that the Church has blundered in sitting as judge over men of science, and has done great injustice to eminent scholars. Synod and Curatorium may be able to decide whether a nominee for professor is truly reformed, but those bodies cannot judge his capability to teach certain studies. And this inefficiency of Synod may lead to the appointment of "favored sons" or to "church politics," or to one-sidedness, so that men are chosen who favor certain popular ideas. All this is not to the best interests of the College, and hinders science in its natural development.

It has been said that for financial reasons Calvin College (University) should remain a Church institution, because Synod then can decide about the quotas to be contributed by the various churches and Classes. And Synod then can also determine to raise funds for the extension of the College by organizing "drives."

Now the question is whether Synod has a *right* to demand quotas for a cause which, strictly speaking, is not ecclesiastical. According to the Church Order the ecclesiastical assemblies may transact only ecclesiastical matters, and it is not the function of the Church to operate a College (University). We

PACE 11 IS MISSING!!!

We apologize for the inconvenience.

Gospel Preached to Every Man — Continued

Hoeksema's Solution of this Problem

THE manner in which Hoeksema once upon a time tried to solve this problem was indicated by the Rev. B. Kok in his letter to the *Reformed Journal* (Nov. issue). Rev. Kok quoted the following from Hoeksema's *Calvin, Berkhof, and H. J. Kuiper*, "He (Calvin) affirms here, what we have always taught, as we have written often in the past, that, in as far as the message is general and comes to all, it is *conditional.*

"The offer is eternal life.

"The condition limiting this offer is: turn from your wicked ways.

"This condition makes the contents of the general message particular" (p. 32).

Here we see that Hoeksema uses the *conditional* to pare down and limit the general to the particular. Is this a solution to Hoeksema's problem? Obviously it is not. It is a mere verbalism. Either the gospel is preached to every creature, or it is not. An individual's reaction to the gospel, i. e., his meeting or failure to meet the condition (turning from his evil ways) does not determine whether the gospel has or has not been preached to him. Moreover, proclamation comes first, and the individual's reaction comes second and is dependent on the reality of the earlier proclamation. As Paul teaches, a man cannot respond to what he has not heard. How can the "contents of the general message" be made contingent upon man's meeting of the condition of repentance?! By making the content of the gospel one thing for the elect and another for the non-elect, one is making two gospels and is no longer explaining how the *one* gospel of God can be to *every* creature.

Hoeksema's employment of the idea of the conditional does not solve his problem. Why not? Because he will not allow his conditional to be an expression of grace as taught by Point I. His idea of conditional must coincide with the traditional Protestant Reformed conception of "offer," i. e., neither must be an expression of grace to the non-elect.

Hoeksema's failure to connect the general proclamation of the gospel to every creature whether he be elect or reprobate comes into sharp relief if we ask Hoeksema what the gospel says to the reprobate. Hoeksema's answer is that it commands him to turn from his evil ways. This is true, but this *by itself alone* is not the gospel. The gospel says much more, and unless this "more" is proclaimed to the reprobate, the gospel has not been generally preached, preached to every creature. If the gospel is but an instrument of judgment and wrath, for the non-elect, then the gospel of grace has not been preached to him.

In view of the limitation that Hoeksema places upon the gospel's address to the reprobate, it is not surprising that he has always rejected the idea that the gospel is an *offer* of salvation, in the meaning that word has in Christian Reformed theology. He recognizes of course that the Canons of Dordt (III, IV, Art. 9) assert that Christ is "offered" in the gospel, but he insists that this "offer" means merely "to show," "to exhibit."

Nor is it surprising that Hoeksema today would not express himself as he did in his early writing quoted above. In view of the limitation that he places on the gospel's address to the reprobate, it is not surprising that he today insists that the term *conditional* ought not to be used in defining gospel proclamation to the individual hearer.

To be sure he does not deny that the term *condition* can be properly used—just as the term *offer* can be properly used. How can the first term be properly used? When used as a *factual* statement. Hoeksema has no objection to the factual conditional statement: If a man believes, God will save him. But he strongly objects to the conditional statement: If you believe, God will save you

Why will he accept the former, but spiritedly reject the latter? The first is a purely *factual* statement. None can deny that if a man believes God will save him. But Hoeksema repudiates this statement when cast in the form of *address*. When it is cast in the form of the second statement: If you believe, God will save you, Hoeksema rejects it.

The first statement: If a man believes, God will save him, is factually true. Hence Hoeksema accepts it as legitimate. But this statement is also highly *abstract*. It cannot be addressed to a particular man, if by "man" (in "if a man believes") you mean the particular man to whom you are making this statement, for then it means: If *you* believe, God will save *you*. That, urges Hoeksema, cannot and may not be said to every creature. Consequently, Hoeksema repudiates the position of those in the Protestant Reformed Churches who use the condition of address as a means of preaching the gospel to all. He repudiates their theology because they believe it is legitimate to say: If you believe, God will save you. He will allow only the factual, abstract conditional statement: If a man believes, God will save him, a statement that cannot be addressed to any particular man (for the particular man will say, I am a man, and this statement means that if *I* believe, God will save *me*).

In the above it was stated that Hoeksema's earlier manner of solving his problem was a mere verbalism, a playing with words. The truth of this judgment is now apparent, for his present limitation of legitimate conditions to the factual, abstract conditional that cannot be addressed to the individual man does *not* establish a connection between general proclamation and the individual, particular man. On the basis of his own theology, Hoeksema can no longer write as he did in the writing quoted by Rev. Kok. In distinction from Rev. Kok, Hoeksema now rejects the employment of the conditional for interpreting general gospel *proclamation*, i. e., a proclamation that is proclamation indeed, an address to a particular individual man.

Has Hoeksema Changed His Position?

HOEKSEMA'S willingness to recognize the validity of the factual conditional (If a man believes, God will save him), does not mean that he subscribes to a conditional theology. For it must not be overlooked that there is nothing conditional about, "If a man believes, God will save him" *as long as this cannot be addressed to any particular man.* It is an abstract truth that cannot be applied to any particular man. Hence, acceptance of the factual condition does not commit Hoeksema to a conditional theology.

Rev. Kok believes that Hoeksema's rejection of conditions is a departure from Protestant Reformed theology as

Hoeksema himself taught it formerly. Consequently Rev. Kok thinks I am mistaken when I declare that those in the Protestant Reformed Churches who now believe in conditional theology have taken a step toward the Christian Reformed Church.

In both instances I think Rev. Kok mistaken. Hoeksema has not changed his theology, except in the sense that he has *purified* it. Consistency demands that Protestant Reformed theology repudiate conditions. This theology can retain conditions in the abstract, but it cannot retain the conditional as a means of interpreting and determining gospel-address. Protestant Reformed theology has always denied that gospel preaching is of the nature of an "offer." It must therefore deny that gospel preaching is of a conditional nature. It is not Hoeksema but Kok who has departed from the genius of Protestant Reformed theology.

Hoeksema has not always expressed himself consistently on the matter of conditions. This has provided those who differ from him with quotations and fuel for debate. But a few quotations and a bit of inconsistency ought not to becloud the real issue. And Hoeksema's purification of his theology by a removal of some of the old leaven that clung to it, ought not to be presented as though it were a theological departure. Hoeksema sees clearly what Rev. Kok does not see: if the conditional is used to interpret the general preaching of the gospel, and used to determine gospel address, then there is no reason for continuing to reject the Christian Reformed definition of *offer* as an actual offer of salvation to any man who hears the gospel. Rev. Kok should either repudiate conditions and make common cause with Hoeksema, or he ought to allow the leaven of conditions to lead him to accept the Christian Reformed conception of the gospel as an offer to any who hear the gospel, and return to the Christian Reformed Church. His present position is a half-way house. He denies common grace, but he holds to a conception of conditional gospel-address which bespeaks an offer of the gospel to all who hear, and therefore of a grace which is common. His present theology is a theology of inconsistency: it is neither Protestant Reformed nor Christian Reformed.

But if Rev. Kok and his group would return to Hoeksema, then they must accept the great weakness of Hoeksema's position, namely, his conception of the gospel—a weakness which Kok's conditional theology is trying to overcome. Hoeksema's gospel cannot be preached. It has lost its addressibility. It has nothing to say to the *particular* man. At best it can be merely announced to a generality of men. Hoeksema must know the *identity* of the particular man, and the particular man must be identified as an elect before the gospel can be addressed to him. Hoeksema's gospel can only be addressed to the Church, and within the Church. This accounts on the one hand for the less than enthusiastic mission impulse in Protestant Reformed Churches. His theology also accounts for and supports the kind of Ethics which contends that God is not for the world, that the Church is not for the world, a kind of Ethics which demands that the neighbor be identified as regenerate or non-regenerate, Christian brother or non-Christian brother before the Christian dispenses his love—a matter which I shall treat in a following issue of this *Journal.*

In conclusion then it must be asserted that Hoeksema, through his denial that gospel proclamation is grace for all who hear, has divorced the *general* proclamation of the gospel from *particular* men. By his denial of Point I, he has separated the general message from the particular hearer, and is unable to establish a connection between them. In earlier years, as Rev. Kok points out, he attempted to do so by means of the term *conditional!* Today he sees that Protestant Reformed theology cannot accept such a solution. This leaves his problem unsolved, and makes it clear that Hoeksema's conception of the gospel is a gospel deprived of its addressibility to the particular man—and every man is a particular man!

* * *

The theology supporting Point I does not have this problem. The gospel of Point I can be preached. To all hearers, whether they be elect or reprobate, it bespeaks a gracious offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. To whomsoever it is addressed it proclaims: If you believe on Jesus Christ, you shall be saved. Its gospel is a gospel that can be preached to every creature. It teaches a gospel that can be addressed to every man because it is a gracious offer to every creature who hears the gospel. It can do so because it does not interpret the gospel of grace by the principle of the equal ultimacy of election and reprobation. Because it refuses to so interpret the gospel, it does not separate the message from the hearer, and therefore does not face the impossible task of relating them together again. Once they are separated by the principle of equal ultimacy, it is impossible to bring them together again. Once the gospel is interpreted in terms of this principle, the gospel cannot be regained within this scheme of interpretation. The principle of equal ultimacy destroys the gospel. The evidence of such destruction is the fact that a gospel so interpreted cannot be preached to the particular man. And whatever else the gospel may be, we know from the command of Jesus that it is something that can be addressed to every creature. Where this addressibility to every man is lost, the gospel of Jesus has been lost.

Some Thoughts on Christian Social Action

By DIRK JELLEMA*

Two recent articles in the *Journal,* the one, "World Calling," by Rev. G. Stob in September, and the other, "Cultural Compositism," by Rev. L. Verduin in October, have some bearing on Christian social action, a field in which I am interested. Rev. Stob stresses the danger of Anabaptist separation in this field; Rev. Verduin the danger of a "monolithic Christianity" which tries to force itself on the whole society. While I am in full agreement with their basic ideas and warnings, I think that both articles tend to oversimplify a very complex problem. Hence I submit these comments, directed in the main to Rev. Verduin's writing. But first a brief comment in passing on Rev. Stob's argument.

*Dr. Jellema teaches medieval history at the University of West Virginia, and currently heads the Expansion Drive Committee of the Christian Labor Association.

Christian Social Action — Continued

The Anabaptist idea of separatism and world-withdrawal is, I should think, repugnant to any Calvinist, and I share Rev. Stob's concern about it, also about its present threat. What I must in fairness to the facts make clear, however, is that "the new CLA pamphlet,"[1] is in no sense a plea for Anabaptist separatism. It is a plea, rather, for active pioneering based on Christian social principles.[2]

Mr. Stob, like so many others, thinks that separate organization in the field of labor, if proved valid, would imply separate organization in other fields. This implication is not necessary. The "antithesis" is a matter of principle (*beginsel*), but whether separate organization is advisable in any given field is a matter of application (*practijk*).

Finally, Rev. Stob has some doubts about the whole idea of working towards "a Christian society." In this, everything hinges on what one means by a Christian society. The pamphlet *Pioneering* . . . . used the term as meaning a society in which the institutions are shaped by the Christian dynamic, and in which the leadership is Christian; not in the sense of a society where the Christian *Weltanschauung* is forced on all people.

I think Rev. Stob and I would agree that there is room for honest disagreement on some of these things; and also that further discussion will help clarify the issues.

I come now to Rev. Verduin's stimulating article. He takes issue with the idea of a "monolithic" culture in which all must accept the Christian "myth" (Where Verduin uses "myth" I shall use *ideology* to express the same thing, a set of beliefs requiring religious commitments).

Verduin favors "cultural compositism," by which he means "folks with radically different loyalties living next door to each other. Christianity is mortally afraid of any single "Myth" (i. e., ideology) in any given cultural community." It might well be argued, on the contrary, that any given society is committed either to one ideology, or to more than one if they are not mutually exclusive; but never to two radically different ideologies; in that case the society becomes two societies. It might be argued that what we have in this country is (mainly) two ideologies, Christianity and humanism, which have many ideals in common and which can tolerate each other: and which both now are very puzzled with the problem of religious toleration in the real sense, that is, what to do with followers of a "Myth" or ideology which is radically opposed to their own: that is, Communism. It might be argued that what exists in Europe (and has existed there since the French Revolution) is several ideologies which cannot tolerate each other, and which have therefore split the body into mutually intolerant splinter groups (Christians, Liberals, Communists, *etc.*), and that therefore we can no longer speak (and could not since 1789) of a real "European society."

That is, what we have in the USA is not "cultural compositism" in Verduin's sense, but a society in which the dominant ideologies are, in practice, if not of course in principle, similar enough to tolerate each other.

What interpretation of the history of the church then emerges? It is one different in some respects from Verduin's.[3]

The key New Testament idea in this field is, it seems to me, that of the leaven and the dough. Christianity is to permeate society and influence it, acting through existing institutions, as Verduin points out. And, despite the strong attraction throughout the history of the church for another possibility—denouncing society as hopelessly corrupt—most Christian thinkers have held to this idea. That is, that the *civitas dei* should be intermingled and intertwined with the institutions of society.

Well, suppose the leaven does its work, and the dough becomes bread — the society becomes "Christian," or at least in large part. What then? When this happened in the dying Roman Empire (with Constantine), some continued to advocate withdrawal from a society which they thought was still basically corrupt, though nominally Christian. Others advocated the subordination of the Church to the now Christian society; that is, subordination to the State, and this idea prevailed in the east and later in the Byzantine Empire. Others advocated that both Church and State, though independent of each other, should be closely related, and both under God. This idea prevailed in the west, and hence in the medieval period of our own Western Civilization.

Now, in a civilization which considers itself Christian, and its institutions Christian, it is natural that membership in the civilization should be defined in terms of Christian belief. This is a key idea of medieval (and Reformation) society, and seemed overwelmingly obvious to them. Apart from definitely non-Christian groups such as the Cathari, this idea was not denied by the "medieval sects," as Verduin calls them. Groups like the Waldensians and the Hussites and the Lollards insisted however that they were Christian groups, the Church notwithstanding. The only point at issue was how heresy was to be defined, and by whom. One obvious answer, proposed by the Anabaptists in the Reformation period, was that no human tribunal was competent to define heresy; and that therefore religious toleration of all who claimed to be Christians should be allowed. Therefore a non-Christian, though he might be tolerated (as the Jews were tolerated) if he did not try to convert others away from Christianity, was never regarded as a citizen. Citizenship was defined in terms of ideological allegiance (and it could be argued that the same applies today, that an American-born Communist should not be given citizenship).

Since Christianity was the basis for society, anyone who attacked Christianity was attacking society, was a traitor to society. Heresy was defined in terms of denial of Christian doctrine and was regarded as treason. There was no objection to attacks on priests, bish-

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1. *Pioneering Towards a Christian Society*, CLA. 1600 Buchanan Street, S. W., Grand Rapids. See also T. Brouwer, "The Calvinist and Social Responsibility," *Calvin Forum*, November, 1953, and *Twenty Questions on the CLA*, Buchanan Street Office, Grand Rapids.

2. Many people seem to have the idea that the CLA has officially endorsed the so-called "Chatham" resolution to the 1953 Synod, which calls for disciplinary action against AFL or CIO members. This is not true: see the *Christian Labor Herald* for September, 1953. Personally, I am strongly opposed to the "Chatham resolution," and feel that it would hurt the CLA if adopted.

3. It should be recognized that both Verduin and myself are hampered by considerations of space. The questions at issue here are extremely complex and involved, and any presentation in article form is bound to be over-simplified.

ops or popes; Dante, for example, put the Pope in hell; the theological faculty of the University of Paris at one time denounced the Pope as holding heretical views; the Conciliar movement claimed the pope was not the supreme ruler of the church; etc. Medieval Catholicism was quite different from the Roman Catholic Church today in many respects. Once this is granted, it is clear that heretics are traitors to society and must be tried and punished as such. Who is to judge whether a man is a heretic? The church. Who is to punish him? The State, which deals with punishing traitors. And so the Cathari were judged (quite rightly) to be a danger to Western Civilization, and punished. But so the Waldensians were condemned, and the Spiritual Franciscans, and the Lollards, and the Hussites; and, just as the Crusade, so the Inquisition became a tool for corruption and lust for power. The Reformation based definitions of heresy on the Bible rather than on the Church; but here too power meant corruption. Servetus was condemned. He was a professional astrologer who dabbled in medicine and theology, never denied that heretics should be punished; he simply denied that he was a heretic. Calvin easily showed that he denied the Trinity and was a heretic, so he was turned over to the State for punishment. Servetus never denied that death was a just penalty for heresy; he simply denied that he was guilty of the charge made against him. After Servetus, Catholics were condemned; and then Lutherans and Calvinists condemned the Anabaptists; and finally condemned each other.

The Religious Civil Wars in Europe (1550-1650) made it clear that neither Catholic nor Protestant beliefs would dominate Europe, and also made many doubt the value of trying to define citizenship in terms of religious allegiance. Religion, in the view of these men, was to be tolerated; but the test of citizenship was to be shifted to other things. Ayone who believed in humanism or rationalism or any other system which "preserved the moral values of Christianity" would pass as a citizen; and allegiance to the State increasingly replaced allegiance to Christianity as the basic criterion. And yet within little less than a century it became clear (in 1789 and the French Revolution) that this involved problems also; the Inquisition was begun anew by the Jacobins, this time in the name of democracy. European civilization broke up into ideological splinter groups (Jacobin, Catholic, Communist) which on the Continent could barely tolerate each other; and a country like France today is almost better described as two nations (Catholic and Communist). The 19th century attempt to stop this splintering process by worship of the Volk (nationalism) simply aggravated the situation. The shifting of the criterion for citizenship in the society of Europe did not solve the problem of religious toleration in the broad sense; it did not end the problem of heresy.

THE United States (and also England to some extent) have escaped this process of splintering. The lingering effects of Puritanism softened the impact of the Enlightenment in the 1700's; the United States was little affected by the French Revolution; and the two ideologies which made the most impression on our *volksgeist* were Christianity and a type of humanism which was strongly influenced by it. Hence the United States has not so much solved the problem of ideological toleration as it has simply escaped having to face it. This is of course true only generally. Communism today poses the problem of ideological toleration; so did slavery in the 1850's.

Due to historical circumstances, then, we have escaped here the ideological conflicts which racked Europe. We are not really faced with the problem of radically different ideologies, in the sense that Europe is. Christianity and humanism have many things in common—what is best in humanism is greatly influenced by Christianity—and can co-exist peacefully. It might even be said that the United States is a "monolithic culture" in Verduin's terms, with the criterion of citizenship being acceptance of those things which are respected by both Christianity and humanism, notably the worth of the individual.

In the United States, then, it would seem that the Christian can enter into society more fully than he can in Europe; that he can cooperate with "unbelievers" here more than there; that American institutions are never anti-Christian in the same sense that European institutions are. It also means that here the great danger is in simply conforming to society, taking on the ideas and outlook of American society as sufficient, being satisfied with Flynn or Reuther as sufficient, feeling that the CIO or the NAM are carrying out the full meaning of the Gospel.

The duty of the Christian in the USA, it would seem to me, would be to work for a "Christian society" in the sense of a society which is shaped and moulded by Christian ideals, but which tolerates other ideologies such as humanism, since they can co-exist peacefully with Christianity. One way of reaching this goal is by a separate pioneering organization, such as the CLA claims to be. It thus seems to me that *Reformed Journal* readers interested in Christian social action should consider the CLA carefully, criticize it where it needs criticism, and give it their active support if it proves to be what they feel it should be.

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